

Oisín in Tír na n-Óg (*Oisín in the Land of Youth*)

This is another legend about the Fianna. In it a warrior called Oisín travels to a magical land called Tír na n-Óg, in English the Land of Youth.

One day Fionn Mac Cumhaill and his son Oisín were hunting for deer with the Fianna. The Fianna were a group of brave warriors who protected the people of Ireland.

They were hunting in a valley near the lakes of Killarney in County Kerry. There was a thick morning mist all around them. It was hard to see anything through the mist.

Suddenly through the mist they saw a snow-white horse with a beautiful princess on its back. The horse came directly towards them.

The princess had long golden hair and a crown of jewels on her head. She wore a colourful silk dress. She stopped her horse beside Fionn and Oisín.

‘What is your name?’ they asked her. ‘My name is Niamh Chinn Óir’, she replied. ‘I am the daughter of the king of Tír na n-Óg, a beautiful country far away across the sea. It is a place where people never grow old. I am here to ask Oisín to come back with me to Tír na n-Óg,’ she said.

‘Why should I leave this beautiful place and go with you to Tír na n-Óg?’ asked Oisín. ‘I have seen you from far off,’ she said ‘and I have fallen in love with you. Now if you come with me to Tír na n-Óg I will be your wife’. Oisín said, ‘Yes I will go with you to Tír na n-Óg’.

Fionn was sad to see his son leave but he wished him well. Oisín then said goodbye to Fionn and the Fianna. He jumped up behind Niamh on her horse. They galloped off together across the sea to Tír na n-Óg.

Oisín and Niamh lived happily in Tír na n-Óg for almost 300 years, though it felt no longer than a few days to Oisín. He was very happy in Tír na n-Óg, except for one thing - he wanted to see Fionn and the Fianna one more time.

Niamh agreed that Oisín should go back to Ireland on a short visit. ‘Take my snow-white horse’, she said. ‘He will bring you safely to Ireland, but you must promise me one thing. Never get off the horse or let your feet touch the ground while you are in Ireland.’

Oisín was surprised that Niamh asked him to make this promise. However, he agreed that he would do as she asked.

When Oisín reached Ireland, he found that everything had changed. Houses that his family and his friends had lived in were only ruins.

When he asked about Fionn and the Fianna, nobody had even heard of them. He could not understand this. Oisín could find no trace of his father or his friends, so he decided to return to Tír na n-Óg.

On his way back, he saw some men trying to lift a heavy rock in a field. He was a strong man so he knew that he would be able to lift the rock. He bent down from his horse to help them.

However, just as he raised the rock into the air, the strap on his saddle snapped. Oisín fell to the ground.

As soon as he touched the ground, a great change came over him. He became an old, old man with long, grey hair. He was now a 300-year-old man who was not able to walk very well.

The snow-white horse galloped back to Tír na n-Óg, leaving Oisín behind. A short while later, poor Oisín died.